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V. VERESTCHAGIN.

WHY I PAINTED WAR PICTURES.

VASSILI VERESTCHAGIN.

Observing life through all my various travels, I have been particularly struck by the fact that even in our time people kill one another everywhere under all possible pretexts, and by every possible means. Wholesale murder is still called *war*, while killing individuals is called *execution*. Everywhere the same worship of brute strength, the same inconsistency; on the one hand men slaying their fellows by the million for an idea often impracticable, are elevated to a high pedestal of public admiration: on the other, men who kill individuals for the sake of a crust of bread, are mercilessly and promptly exterminated—and this even in Christian countries, in the name of Him whose teaching was founded on peace and love. These facts, observed on many occasions, made a strong impression on my mind, and after having carefully thought the matter over, I painted several pictures of wars and executions. These subjects I have treated in a fashion far from sentimental, for having my-

THE FORGOTTEN SOLDIER.

VASSILI VERESTCHAGIN.

Hushed is the battle: silence fills
Anew the hollows of the hills;
Save where, amid the rocks alone,
Is feebly heard a dying groan.

Above the topmost snowy height,
A sombre spot in azure light,
On steady wing, intent on prey,
A vulture wends its circling way.

Far from its watch-place in the skies,
A gleam of scarlet it espies,
Amid the bushes, where the mist
The forehead of the hill has kissed.

Sweeps the vulture widely round,
Sees what cumbereth the ground.
Folds its pinions; from afar
Earthward drops—like a falling star.

Together to the banquet fly
Its comrades summoned by its cry;
With eager beaks and claws the troop
Of vultures on the booty swoop.

But hark! fresh pinions cleave the air
The eagles to the feast repair;
Above the dead, with hunger's rage,
The rival bands in fight engage.

How long the contest lasted none
Can say, nor which the vict'ry won;
Only the hills, the battle o'er,
Have seen the vulture wheel no more.

All in the mountains is at peace,
There all things flourish, gleam, increase;
Day follows day, the years go by—
The soldier's bones forgotten lie.

self killed many a poor fellow-creature in different wars, I have not the right to be sentimental. But the sight of heaps of human beings slaughtered, shot, beheaded, hanged under my eyes in all that region extending from the frontier of China, to Bulgaria, has not failed to impress itself vividly on the imaginative side of my art.

And although the wars of the present time have changed their former character of God's judgments upon man, nevertheless, by the enormous energy and excitement they create, by the great mental and material exertion they call forth, they are a phenomenon interesting to all students of human civilization. My intention was to examine war in its different aspects, and transmit these faithfully. Facts laid upon canvas without embellishment must speak eloquently for themselves. One of the pictures is

THE EMPEROR ALEXANDER II. BEFORE PLEVNA.

By the time I had made my way to headquarters I heard shouts, "Road, road!" and at that minute a Cosack escort rode past, followed by an open carriage in which sat the Emperor. He greeted me with a "Good morning, Verestchagin." Shortly afterward prayers began at headquarters, the priest in trembling accents imploring God to "grant the victory and preserve the men." . . .

While we were yet on our knees, suddenly the crash of artillery fire and roll of musketry burst on our ears.

This proved to be a mistake on the part of some of our forces who had anticipated the time fixed upon for the assault by four hours. After prayers were over breakfast was served, and during this meal His Majesty turned to us, goblet in hand, and said: "To the health of those now fighting there, hurrah!" Our answering cheer was drowned in the din of battle.

The sky was heavily overcast, and the rain continued to fall, as the group of officers and others surrounding the Emperor watched with their field glasses the course of the fighting, every now and then exchanging a few words of comment, and discussing the probabilities of the situation. Meanwhile he sat motionless on his camp-stool with his eyes fixed on the Turkish redoubts. The roar of artillery and rattle of small arms were unceasing. We heard distinctly the hurrahs of the Russians, and the Allah! Allah! of the Turks. At first the Turkish redoubts were almost silent, and many supposed them to be short of ammunition, but as our columns advanced, volley after volley poured forth and raked the storming battalion with shells and grape shot. We saw our advance checked, the ranks thrown into confusion, the lines broken. . . . Again they move forward with a cheer. . . but their advance is slower . . . they are disorganized. . . . Some stop. . . their cheers sound faint and uncertain. . . . See! they turn back. . . they run. The field of battle is shrouded in smoke.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

The following day, having learned from an aide-de-camp who had arrived from General Skobelev that of my two brothers who were with him, one had been killed and the other wounded, I set out with my wound still unhealed to reach the left flank, which was a long way off. I met numbers of wounded along the road, and on reaching the field-lazaret asked a doctor how many had passed through his hands. "We have reached the seventh thousand," was his answer. Although eighteen thousand men were placed *hors de combat* on the Russian side.

The doctors worked with wonderful zeal and unselfishness, the services rendered by the Sisters of Mercy were beyond all praise, yet in spite of this, vast numbers remained for days together with their wounds undressed, without either food or drink! All previous calculations and preparations were falsified by actual necessities. Orders had been given to prepare for three to four thousand wounded; instead of this there were actually over thirteen thousand. At the divisional hospital I visited, accommodation had been provided for five hundred men, but several thousands were brought in, causing enormous overpressure. In their anxiety that their wounds should be dressed, all crowded to the tents intended for the severely wounded only.

At the entrance of one of these there is a figure of a man breathing heavily, convulsively. He commanded the regiment which first entered the Turkish redoubt and was mortally wounded. He is left in peace with a gauze covering to keep off the flies adhering to his warm blood. Farther on is a general with a broken leg patiently awaiting the dresser, and inquiring of new-comers the position of affairs at the front. Some are beyond the surgeon's skill and the attendants are summoned to remove their bodies and make room for others. Their places are quickly filled. This time a wounded soldier is brought in, covered with a soiled cloak thrown negligently over him; beneath it what would be difficult to recognize as a

living man. The face is of an ashen hue, the features distorted with agony, the eyes dull; he turns a fixed gaze upon the approaching surgeon who stoops and opens his clothes. . . . then lets them drop and passes on to the next: the wound is mortal, no time to waste over it. Without a sob, without a cry, every one waits his turn to have his wound dressed and to be sent home. In dry weather the wounded were comparatively better off; during the rains, however, all these thousands, for whom there was no room in the tents, sat, stood, and lay in pools of water.

COUNT TOLSTOI.

An American traveller, who lately passed the day with Tolstoi, found him steadfast in the conviction that withdrew him from society — the conviction that Jesus Christ came into the world to teach men how to live in it, and that He meant literally what He said when He forbade us luxury, war, litigation, unchastity and hypocrisy. . . . It does not much matter where you begin with him; you feel instantly that the man is mighty, and mighty through his conscience; that he is not trying to surprise or dazzle you with his art, but that he is trying to make you think clearly and feel rightly about vital things with which "art" has often dealt with diabolical indifference or diabolical malevolence. — *W. D. Howells*.

RUSSIA.

Russia is at once the most military and the least peaceful of modern nations. No one reason for its disturbed and dangerous condition is more weighty than the fact that, for its population of 110,000,000, it expends \$5,000,000 for public instruction; while the State of New York, with 6,000,000 people, expends \$11,000,000 for public schools. Popular education is necessary to free government, while despotic government grows more perilous every year.

SENATOR INGALLS DEFEATED.

The man who declared "the purification of politics an iridescent dream," and the "cant about the corruption of politics fatiguing in the extreme," has been retired by his constituents. There would be more satisfaction in the result if this conscienceless declaration had been the express ground of his retirement. His successor, Mr. Pfeffer, is a man who has pursued many vocations in many States, school-teacher, farmer, editor of newspapers, and who is now editor of the *Kansas Farmer*. He is a prohibitionist, and a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and a Master Mason. — *Statesman*.

The provision made by law last year to give every town in Massachusetts, which is without a public library, books to the value of one hundred dollars, on condition that annual additions shall be made by the town, has brought out the information that, out of the 351 towns, 248 already have public libraries. It is something to be proud of that only 103 towns are unprovided in some measure with this means of popular education. What books are circulated and who buys them?